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FM AMEMBASSY SUVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0365
INFO RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 0792
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1943
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA 0218
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 1471
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0046
RUEHNZ/AMCONSUL AUCKLAND 0590
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 1005

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SIPDIS

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BANGKOK FOR USAID/OFDA

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SUBJECT: FIJI ASKS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR CYCLONE GENE RELIEF ASSISTANCE

REF: SUVA 34

¶1. (U) On 2/13, Fiji's interim government (IG) briefed the international community on its assessment of damage caused by tropical cyclone Gene, which passed over parts of Fiji 1/28 and 1/29. Total damage is estimated by the IG to be FJ\$45.4 million (approximately USD 30 million). The IG asked the international community to consider providing assistance based on the information presented. According to the presentation, the breakdown of sectoral damage follows:

--agriculture - FJ\$22.8 million
--roads and jetties - FJ\$13.3 million
--water supply - FJ\$5 million
--health system - FJ\$1.4 million
--electricity - FJ\$1.3 million
--rural dwellings - FJ\$1.2 million
--education - FJ\$288 thousand
--forestry - FJ\$212 thousand

The spokesperson noted that damage to the health system refers to flooding of the Fiji School of Nursing and the Navua hospital. He noted that both facilities had been flooded in 2004 and said the damage assessment reflects repairs still unfinished from that flood as well as the cost of the more recent damage.

¶2. (U) The IG said immediate needs are as follows:

--food rations for 51,066 people - FJ\$1.7 million (preliminary figure)
--safe drinking water - FJ\$1.67 million
--housing rehabilitation - FJ\$1.121 million; 297 damaged houses
--road access (to hospitals, schools, workplaces, markets for produce, etc.) - FJ\$13.3 million

The spokesperson noted that the IG has already allocated FJ\$1.7 million for the food rations. He said the Fiji Red Cross is helping to provide water purification tablets in affected areas and another NGO is helping with temporary shelters.

¶3. (U) The IG identified the following long-term needs, not included in the FJ\$45.4 million damage assessment:

--Dredging of silt at estuaries of major rivers - FJ\$7.2 million
--Technical expertise in disaster risk reduction mitigation

programs (no cost given)

--Mainstreaming of climate change into national policies and programs (no cost given)

¶4. (SBU) There were no questions after the presentation and no immediate offers of assistance. The Japan Ambassador told us this afternoon that since his government's disaster assistance focuses on immediate needs, he sees very little likelihood that Japan will offer assistance. We understand that the PRC donated FJ\$30 thousand to the Fiji Red Cross last week.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: In light of the fact that immediate needs like food rations and drinking water have already been addressed (by the IG and the Fiji Red Cross, respectively), there does not appear to be a compelling need for U.S. disaster assistance.

DINGER